

Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* breeding in riverine situations

Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire

Nidification du Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* au bord de rivières. L'auteur rapporte deux cas de nidification du Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* sur des rochers le long ou dans le cours d'une grande rivière: un nid isolé sur un rocher situé sur un îlot dans la rivière Boumba (sud-est du Cameroun), et une colonie d'au moins 30 nids sur une bande rocheuse longeant la rivière Nkébé au pied du Mont Nlonako.

Hořák *et al.* (2007) observed an isolated nest of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* on a vertical rock face beside a dry streambed at the foot of Mt Cameroon. This is not the first observation of Grey-necked Picathartes breeding in a riverine situation. On 30 November 1997 I discovered a nest on a small vertical rock face in an islet of flooded forest on the east bank of the Boumba River (02°40'N 15°13'E), south-east Cameroon. This locality is at the edge of Boumba-Bek Faunal Reserve (now a national park), in primary forest. The rock face was 3 m high, a few metres long and the nest was 2 m above ground. At the end of the long rainy season (April/May–November), the nest was unoccupied and had perhaps not been used for a year or so. My guide (a local fisherman) had seen the birds on the islet in previous years. This represented a major extension of known range to the east (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2000). In late November the islet was accessible only by boat but would have been connected to the east bank of the river in the dry season. Some populations of Grey-necked Picathartes breed in the rains (Ash 1991, Fotso 1993), others in the dry season extending into the short rains of March–April (Brosset & Erard 1986, in Gabon, where the rainy season is bimodal). A nest observed by R. J. Dowsett and myself in Monte Alen National Park, Equatorial Guinea (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1999), contained two eggs on 3 February, in the middle of the main dry season. If the pair on the Boumba River bred in the rains, the nest site, being then in flooded forest, would be especially well protected from mammalian predation.

On 18 February 2001, my guide led me to a large colony of picathartes bordering the Nkébé River, in the foothills of Mt Nlonako, western

Cameroon, in primary forest (04°48'N 09°57'E: Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2001). The nests were placed on a vertical rock face c.100 m long and 10 m high: one end of this structure was accessible from a small sand beach (which would, however, have been flooded in the rainy season), the remainder were inaccessible, being right above a large and permanent river. It was impossible to view the whole of the rocky wall from the opposite bank, but there were at least 30 nests, some more worn than others. They were often grouped in twos (an old one and a fresher one), suggesting that new nests were built close to old ones. Thus 10–15 pairs were probably involved. February is in the middle of the dry season (of December–March), and the nests were unoccupied. The height of the nests varied from 1.5–7.0 m.

The advantage of using rock faces on the edge of rivers or surrounded by water is obvious, especially as regards mammalian predators, and this situation may be more widespread than hitherto suspected. White-necked Picathartes *P. gymnocephalus* has also been reported to do so: in addition to Allport (1991), cited by Hořák *et al.* (2007), Wood (1995) has described briefly a small colony (of 2–3 active nests) sited on a overhanging rock flanking a steep-sided stream, in eastern Sierra Leone.

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Le Pouget, 30440 Sumène, France. E-mail: Dowsett@aol.com

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